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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between Latino students' identity formation and their interpretations of the connection between schooling and career. Autobiographies were written by 47 Mexican American and Puerto Rican students at the end of grade 8, and again by 27 of the same students during grade 11. Virtually all students were from poor or working class homes in an inner-city community with high rates of poverty, crime, and unemployment. The autobiographies covered birth, family, school experiences, friends, and future plans, and were analyzed in terms of each student's family self, student self, and career self. In comparing 8th- and 11th-grade autobiographies, it was apparent that over time, students continued to blame themselves for their poor educational experiences but also began to blame their school and teachers. Students who retained their aspirations were better able to integrate their "critical selves," often in spite of school staff. Although the family self was salient for Mexican American students, it did not appear to provide the social capital needed to facilitate an educational identity. The autobiographies demonstrate that the connection between education and future career was not well developed for most students, and without that connection, they will be unable to tolerate the anxiety that schooling necessarily engenders. Many Latino students, therefore, develop a "defeated self," which leads to "silencing" (disengagement), "resistance" (disruptive behavior), or dropping out. (Contains 15 references.) (SV)

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The *Silencing* of the Lambs: How Latino Students Lose Their 'Voice' in School

by Pamela Anne Quiroz
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Working Paper No. 31
July 1997

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The *Silencing* of the Lambs: How Latino Students Lose Their 'Voice' in School

Table of Contents

Background *1*

Data *2*

Analysis *3*

Eighth Grade Narratives

Family Self *3*

Student Self *4*

Career Self *5*

The School/Career Connection *6*

Juniors in High School *7*

Ethnic Self *7*

Junior Career Self *8*

Conclusion *9*

The Defeated Self *9*

References *10*

Endnotes *10*

In sixth grade my teacher was Mr. S. He had a stick, if you were talking or something he would hit you with it. His stick's name was 'Geor ge.' He had wrapped it in tape so that when he hit you it would hurt more. In seventh grade my teacher had red hair and when she spoke to someone she always spit at that person. Since she retired we got a substitute until the principal could find another capable teacher. So our teacher for a long period of time was Mrs. R. We used to call her 'chocolate chip' because she had a big mole on her upper lip. After Mrs. R. we had another teacher who we thought was going to be our perma - nent seventh grade teacher. She lasted about two days I think. Then she left for an eighth grade class... and the teachers kept changing. That seventh grade was so confusing I didn't learn a thing but I tried.

My worst experience was in 5th grade. I was stu - pid in Math. I had a very low I.O.W.A. score. I didn't know how to divide. When my teacher used to call on me to do a division problem, which I couldn't do, I started to cry. He used to yell at me. So I sometimes just didn't go.

My third teacher was a good teacher because when you behaved well she would give you a lot of candy and if you behave poorly she would put you in the closet. My fifth teacher was Mr._____ . He was a mean teacher. He gave a lot of punishment, he gave punishment if you would stand up. My seventh teacher was Mr._____ he was the best teacher I had. I don't know why he had to leave. When he left every - thing went wrong. My worst experience was when the teacher would call on one of us and I wouldn't know the answer and somebody else would. Or when a child would have an accident and all the other kids would make fun of you.

When I was in the fourth grade I went to another school. They gave cold lunches. The class was divided into grades third and fourth. The teacher would teach the whole class third grade work. Maybe that's why I'm below level. She failed me because I didn't know how to read and she gave me an award for reading well! I never understood that!

These statements are excerpts taken from eighth grade autobiographies, part of the files of the high school students whom I studied. The eighth grade autobiographies offer a portrait of students at the point of entry into high school and are part of a larger collection of data gathered to examine Latino student identity, the variety of experiences Latino students have in school, the way they view their schooling experiences, and their career expectations. The focus of this paper is on the relationship between identity formation and Latino students' connection between schooling and future plans. I present an analysis of 47 Mexican and Puerto Rican student "autobiographies" written at the end of their eighth grade year and 27 which were written (by the same students) during their junior year in high school (1991). These personal narratives provide students' interpretations of the connection between schooling and career, embedding these interpretations within the social context of the school. The narratives help us to understand why, so often, these connections are either missing or inadequate for future educational and career attainment.

The autobiographies include both descriptive and evaluative accounts of events and persons, revealing a variety of ways in which schooling is perceived as punishing to students, with much of the focus on teachers. In general, the narratives signal specific categories of experiences from which a given student derived her/his negative evaluation of schooling. In elementary school these categories include language problems; student mobility; the inherent difficulties of school work; changes in teachers; discipline situations that included corporal punishment; and embarrassment as a result of interactions with teachers. In high school the categories revolve around student harassment, teacher apathy, and classroom boredom. Thus, the autobiographies act as a window into the seemingly intractable dropout rates of Latino children.

Background

Educational researchers have become increasingly interested in what is commonly referred to as the "school-to-work" transition. Most often, it is the high school which presents the focus for study of this transition. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to assume that the links between future career aspirations and establishing an educational pathway for attaining those goals begins at a much earlier stage. Social scientists who study identity suggest that one's identity consists of the presentation of several different selves (e.g., Goffman, 1959). Moreover, it is during adolescence when persons attempt to integrate various selves into a single identity (Erickson, 1963). This process of "self" selection and integration is social as well as internal, with validation of these selves by significant others a salient experience in the development of identity.

How many selves are needed to sustain an educational identity? Erik Erikson suggested that a career self is central in adolescence for the development of identity. In *Self and School Success,* Edwin Farrell characterizes successful students as exhibiting six selves: the *career* self, the *sexual* self, the *peer* self, the *family* self, the *student* self, and the *affiliating* self (1994). However, Farrell argues that the integration of only three selves is necessary for student success in school: the *family* self, the *student* self, and the *career* self. Farrell extends his argument further by saying that for inner city students, only the student and career selves are critical in sustaining an educational identity. The presentation of the various selves for response from others is a crucial activity in the educational pursuits of students. The following represents Farrell's description of the critical "selves" adolescents need to be successful in school:

1) The *Family* Self: This self develops from the primary social group which can be nuclear, single-parent, or extended. This group can be a significant support system or a major source of tension.

2) The *Student* Self: This role can create pressure and stress as well as provide tremendous satisfaction and generate a feeling of empowerment. This self primarily engages in secondary relationships where there is greater social distance between actors and less affect. Moreover, evaluation occurs in a more rationalized system.

3) The *Career* Self: This is the self projected as future worker in the adult world.

In light of these assertions, this analysis asks several related questions: *How aware are Latino children of their chances for social mobility? Does this awareness affect motivation? Do Latino narratives indicate that education is linked to career success? Is there any change between eighth grade year and the junior year in high school? What are the choices of careers? How elaborate is the connection between students' career/future goals and the educational means needed to achieve these goals? What are the similarities and the differences between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, between boys and girls?*

These autobiographies afford us an opportunity to see how Latino students construct identity and whether they manifest the "selves" needed to sustain them through the schooling process — "education must be linked consciously to the prospect of a career." By listening to their "voices," we learn how Latino students define success both in school and in life. This paper provides insights into the direction of participation in the schooling process, the reasons behind students' decisions and behaviors, and some interventions needed to change these persistently unfavorable directions.

Data

Virtually all of the students who wrote autobiographies are from poor or working class homes and constitute what Moore and Pinderhughes refer to as the *Latino underclass* (1993). Their community is typical of an inner city community with high rates of poverty, crime, and unemployment. The eighth grade student autobiographies are derived from three of 13 feeder schools that provide the majority of the students for one predominantly Latino inner city high school. A subset of the original 47 students wrote autobiographical narratives during their Junior year in high school, similar though not identical to the ones written as eighth graders (see Table 1).

Table 1:
STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHERS

Eighth Grade

Puerto Rican		*Mexican*	
Male	10	Male	11
Female	17	Female	9
N=27		*N=20*	

Total N = 47

Juniors

Puerto Rican		*Mexican*	
Male	6	Male	6
Female	5	Female	10
N=11		*N=16*	

Total N = 27

The eighth grade autobiographies were assigned at the end of the academic year by the English teachers and were not graded. This practice had become institutionalized by the three elementary schools, with the autobiographies sent to the high school counselors to provide insights into prospective freshmen students. During my time visiting with the high school counselors, I was able to copy a set of 47 eighth grade narratives. With the assistance of two high school English teachers, I secured copies of personal narratives which 27 of these same students were asked to write as juniors. The teachers explicitly linked this exercise to the autobiographies written at the culmination of their eighth grade year. In addition, having selected a sample of junior level students for structured interviews, I also asked to copy their eighth grade autobiographies. Thus, the 47 eighth grade autobiographies and the 27 junior narratives I secured were useful not only for comparison at different points in time but across time as well. Each set of narratives can be examined as a single data set or together. Since my larger project at the time was focused on students' cumulative experiences with schooling and their subsequent definition of the educational situation, the subset of Junior narratives was particularly useful as an extension and modification of what these students had written earlier in their educational careers.

The structure of the eighth grade autobiographies is conveniently isomorphic to Farrell's six selves, with their teachers providing the outline for students: 1) Birth; 2) Family; 3) School Days; 4) Friends; 5) Future Plans; and 6) Life 10 Years from Now. The structure of the autobiographies written during the junior year in high school is similar though not identical: 1) Birthplace & Ethnic Origins (this section includes family); 2) Educational Experience; and 3) Future Plans.

In addition to the intrinsic value of these student narratives, is the analytic value in the acquisition of data that exists beyond the initiation and control of the researcher. The format for the presentation of information minimizes the presence of the researcher, or as Howard Becker would say, it "depriviledges the analyst" by providing the views and experiences of students in their own words and without the prompting or bias of the researcher (1989). As such, these student autobiographies offer a look at the stuff of which Latino students construct their own lives. What follows is an analysis of these autobiographies based upon Farrell's three "selves" needed for developing/ sustaining an educational identity (*family*, *student*, and *career*), with specific attention given to the connection between the *student* self and the *career* self.

Analysis

Although I am primarily responsible for the analysis of this information, a research assistant also independently analyzed these narratives. In addition, undergraduate minority students analyzed some of these autobiographies in a summer research methods course. These separate analyses provided valuable feedback, confirmation of some ideas, and new interpretations for consideration. Nonetheless, in presenting each set of narratives, first separately, then comparatively, I take sole responsibility for this analysis.

Eighth Grade Narratives

Family Self

One of the most extensive sections of these autobiographies is the description of family. It is the *family* "self" where differences between the two ethnic groups are manifested. Mexican students use significantly more "space" writing about their families, with the *family* self often overwhelming other sections of the narrative (see Table 2).

Table 2:
STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Eighth Grade

	Mexican	*Puerto Rican*
Birth		
Family	3	1
Friends	1	*
School Days	2	2
Future Plans	1	1
Life Ten Years From Now	*	*
Mean # Pages	7	6

Junior

	Mexican	*Puerto Rican*
Birthplace	*	*
Ethnic Origins	2	2
Family	1	*
Educational Experience	2	2
Future Plans	1	1
Mean # Pages	6	6

**represents anything from a few sentences to two paragraphs on this self*
-The numbers represent the average number of pages devoted to each section.
-Birth in 8th grade is incorporated into the family for Mexicans but separate for Puerto Ricans.

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Along with detailed descriptions of their birth (e.g., *"My father was in the delivery room when I was born. When my father had me in his arms, tears started coming out of his eyes"*), Mexican students offer warm descriptions of family histories, interpersonal interactions with both nuclear and extended family members, the significance of family members in their lives, and the desire to model themselves after parents (e.g., *"My father works very hard every day. My father is a carpenter and when I grow up I want to be a carpenter just like him"* or even *"When I come home the house is always clean. Even my room is spotless. I hope I marry a girl like my mother*). Only two of the Mexican student narratives described a nuclear family with only one parent present.

Puerto Rican students, on the other hand, did not write lengthy descriptions of family life. Puerto Rican descriptions of family members are cursory descriptions, generally providing little more than the age, birthplace, and name of each family member. Those few who did elaborate on family (seven of 27), gave sensitive descriptions of interactions with family members. Another distinction of the Puerto Rican narratives is the explicit mention of unemployment of the head of household (11 of 27). Only six of the 27 students writing described a nuclear family with both parents in the household.[1]

At least superficially, the family self is both salient and positive for Mexican students. However, the majority of the Puerto Rican students did not describe family negatively, they simply did not offer much description. Although we cannot infer that the family self is not significant for Puerto Rican eighth graders, these narratives do not portray the family as the network of love, pride, and support reported by Mexican students.

Student Self

The *student* self that emerges in both Mexican and Puerto Rican autobiographies suggests that schooling is largely a confusing and/or punishing experience for Latino students. Just what makes this aspect of identity so unrewarding? In general, the autobiographies signaled specific categories of difficulty from which students derived negative evaluations of schooling: language problems, student mobility (movement from one country, city, neighborhood, house, or school), the inherent difficulties of school work, teacher mobility (frequent changes in teachers), discipline situations that included corporal punishment, and embarrassment resulting from interactions with teachers. In reviewing their elementary school years, students typically evaluated a given year in terms of the teacher along with the positive or negative events that transpired during that year. The following excerpts offer some examples:

(On Language Difficulties)

> "I don't remember what happened in kindergarten through third grade. All I remember is that I was in a bilingual room from kindergarten through fifth grade. The fifth grade was the scariest because it was a new change for me. I didn't know anyone in the room. The work was more difficult but I managed."
>
> When I went to kindergarten, I was very scared. I started crying and didn't want my mom to go. My teacher would call on me and I would start crying because I didn't know what she was saying (a student who attended his first two grades in Mexico).
>
> In third grade I came to Chicago. I did not know any English but they were still teaching me. I felt weird. In fourth grade I still did not know English but I passed. In fifth grade I know a little bit of English. Mr._____ taught me everything I know.[2]

(Teacher Mobility)

> That same year we had a lot of substitutes like (names five teachers), and we heard that Mrs. S was going to retire. So we finally, had a teacher Mr. G.[3] [see also quotations on p.1].

(Discipline)

> At the age of six I was in Mrs. P.'s room. She was a scary woman, talk about weirdos. She kept a pet porcupine in her closet. Once I'd gotten in trouble and when ever someone gets in trouble she would send him to the closet with the porcupine.
>
> In my third year in school she (the teacher) taught me to count to 100 and she taught me to respect my elders... if I would talk, she would pull my ear. Boy, was I scared of her but she showed me how to write my name.

> When I passed 4th grade I went to __, the meanest teacher I ever had. He use to put tape on my mouth and put me in the coat room and hit me with a ruler across my back.

(The Difficulty of the Work)

> When I got in to fifth through eighth all the games stopped and work began. It had its fun times to but it also had the times when you thought the whole world was coming down on you.[4]

Students are either appreciative for simply learning to write their name, count to 100, and respect their elders in *third* grade, or they engage in self blame for their schooling experiences (*e.g., "in sixth grade I started to be stupid"* or *"I got dumber and dumber in school"*). Indeed, teachers represent the major school agent that conveys or translates the message of the school to the student, and unfortunately, these narratives are rife with examples of negative translations. Students whose cumulative experiences in elementary school are negative can hardly be expected to have much of a *student* self and for those who do, it is typically expressed as a negative self.

Career Self

The eighth grade responses to "Future Plans" and "Life Ten Years from Now" were combined to parallel Farrell's "career self." These two sections of the autobiographies identify students' anticipated or desired future roles and responsibilities. Jerome Kagan's work described how "White" middle class youth formulate ideas of their future roles with specific ideas of professional careers (e.g., pediatrician, electrical engineer, journalist) — in other words, "high status, highly paid" careers (1984). Unlike their middle class counterparts, Latino eighth graders in this analysis indicate vague ideas of future careers, emphasizing the income and the potential material wealth of the chosen career rather than the characteristics of the job. These students tend to select careers that are "highly visible" — meaning those they are most likely to encounter on television (*e.g., model, NBA basketball player, "famous" doctor).*

In an earlier work on the aspirations of inner city children, Farrell (1990) found that none of his "at-risk" students aspired to be professionals, nor did they have a picture of themselves as future members of the middle class. Here however, both Puerto Rican and Mexican students, male and female, aspire to have high status occupations, with only three girls and two boys selecting service or skilled labor occupations.

Table 3 illustrates that while career choices show little variation between ethnic groups, there is a significant distinction between genders, with the majority of Latina girls listing traditionally female occupations (*e.g., nurse, model, teacher)* and boys preferring traditionally male occupations (e.g., *doctor*). Additionally, all of the 26 girls wrote that they eventually wanted a family. However, none of the girls described aspirations to be a homemaker. Moreover, none of the girls indicated a desire to get married or to have children before the age of 21. In fact, the typical description by both girls and boys very much typified the so-called "American Dream," with plans for marriage, two children (a girl and a boy), a home, two cars, and travel on vacations.

Table 3:
OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES:
EIGHTH GRADE

Major Occupational Groups	*Puerto Rican*		*Mexican*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managerial & Professional	10	12	8	6
Technical, Sales & Support		1		
Service		1		2
Precision, Craft, & Repair				2
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers				
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing				
Don't Know	1	1		1
No Response				1
Ambiguous Answer		1		
Total	11	16	8	12

Most commonly cited professions: architect, nurse, basketball player, teacher, clothes designer, business executive, and model.

How clearly defined are Latino students' career aspirations in eighth grade?

The answer is "not very." The various reasons for selecting a given career seldom focus on the career, nor is the reader convinced that the student really has more than a very superficial understanding of the career, with such comments as:

"I'd like to be an architect because it's easy work. All I would have to do is sit down and draw a sketch of a house."

"I want to finish high school and be a beautician, or a secretary, or teach pre-school since I like little kids. I just want to be a somebody."

This last comment of wanting to be "*a somebody*" is common among the students. Several students wrote similar statements, such as "*I want to be somebody important*" with the implication of course, that right now they are not important. It is difficult to know whether Latino students begin to formulate a sense of the career self as early as middle school or whether these responses were stimulated by the assignment. For this reason, it is also difficult to tell whether these students are unable to specify their aspirations because they had not given them much thought or because they simply have not been assisted in understanding the connections between schooling and career.

The School/Career Connection

How well understood is the pathway or connection between schooling and a future career?

There are several studies of middle class children which address this question. What we find is that, for the middle class child, both family and school assist children in making connections between dreams/fantasies/aspirations and the necessary routes or pathways for turning these "dreams" into reality. Unfortunately, when we look at how Latino students see themselves in 10 years (by age 23-25), we get a very pessimistic picture of the successful integration of these two selves. Both male and female students who state they want to be either doctors or famous models also see themselves as having a house, a husband/ wife, and two kids by the time they are 24. Additionally, they see themselves as having been employed in the "future" career for some time. Less than a third of the 47 narratives describe anything vaguely resembling the typical expected trajectory for obtaining a high status, highly skilled job. Beyond this were those few students who described wanting to be both a teacher *and* a model or some other combination of professions such that future plans and life in ten years took on the character of a fantasy rather than an achievable goal:

"By the time I am 23 or 24 I will be successful, living with my quintuplets and husband in Puerto Rico. I will be a veterinarian and live in a big beautiful house that will last a real long time."

"My future plans are to be a mechanic and work so hard that I will be the best mechanic in Chicago and people will have to pay me so much that maybe I will also own a few companies."

"I would like to be a cartoon animator because I enjoy drawing a lot... In 10 years, I will be grown up and I will probably see some of my friends making the big bucks, they will be lawyers, architects, doctors, writers, cops, or policemen and women, but I will be an animator, with God's help of course."

Even those students whose goals are more "practical" appear confused as to how to proceed in obtaining the goal:

"My future plans are to work with computers. I don't know what type of computer work I want to do yet but I would want to do that kind of thing. I don't know how to do things like that but I would like to learn."

"I want to try to graduate from grammar school and then high school. I was thinking of going to a business school instead of college. I would like to be a business person but I don't really know what I'd do. I would probably not get married until at the age of 25. I would like to work downtown, have my own office, with my own secretary, and drive a black Porsche."

There are obvious problems manifested in students' connections between career goals and the means to achieve them. Yet at this point in their lives, none of these Latino eighth graders even hint at being unwilling or uninterested in work or careers. This point is mentioned because of the attribution of negative dispositions, limited aspirations, and casual work habits to members of the underclass. In his work on the underclass, William J. Wilson maintains that struc-

tural conditions have led to the poor being uneducated, unwilling to work, and unreliable (1993). Presumably the acquisition of these attributes occurs during childhood to generate what Massey & Denton refer to as "oppositional cultures" (1994: pp. 167-168). However, the majority of eighth grade narratives take a benign attitude toward school and manifest positive dispositions toward work. Thus, despite negative descriptions of the elementary school experience, most students remain hopeful.

"My future is for me to graduate out of high school. I plan to have my future easier. Because I'd rather graduate than be a drop out. I would want to live a better life. I want to have a job when I grow up."

Often, future goals take on the characteristics of a fantasy, possessing some ethereal quality. Likewise they imply some current aspect of failed family situations (*e.g., "I want to be a* good *dad to my kids," "I want a man who will love and care for me and my kids, not hit me,"* or *"I want a five room house with four washrooms, one for everyone to have a bath - room for themselves"*) — a sense of hope for the future as better than the present.

Farrell argues that students who do poorly in school cannot be expected to develop much of a career self. However, without exception, each of these Latino eighth graders indicate they want (not just jobs but) careers and a better life. Albeit in an ill-defined way, at this age Latino students are still trying to connect their future aspirations to education. These students are not antagonistic to the prevailing order of the school, they are simply seeking their place within this order. By the time many of these students are juniors however, educational or career hopes expressed in elementary school become severely muted. By this point they see the school as rejecting them and they in turn, are often resigned or even angry.

Juniors in High School

The high school autobiographies contain many of the same descriptions and elements of difficulty with school expressed in the elementary narratives. However, descriptions of high school revolve around issues of discipline, violence, or potential violence from peers, bureaucratic inefficiency, teacher apathy or criticism, and classroom boredom. In fact, the most common description used to characterize high school was "boring" and the most common complaint was teacher apathy.

(On Boredom)

"They [the teachers] *talk too much. Then assume we know everything, giving us work without helping us to understand it."*

"When a teacher reads everything to you like you're a baby and you just sit there and listen and do nothing, every day, all day, its boring."

"A class is boring when a student does not put forth effort to learn. A teacher is boring when the teacher does not care whether the students learn or try.

(Teacher Apathy)

"They don't care. Teachers laugh at students if they're a little slow or something! Then students will start talking to them loudly in their face. Then the teacher will just throw them out. Same thing, every class.

"My algebra teacher is always saying she is glad its Friday so she can go home. She hates to come here. She said that a lot."

"Music is my least favorite subject. The teachers changed and he was always telling us that he's wait - ing for his school to get him back. All he does is show videos and gives us worksheets and has us answer questions about what we watch. And he yells a lot."

In addition to their classroom experiences, juniors described other experiences in school which added to school stress, such as meetings with counselors, particularly as a result of teacher or administrator (disciplinary) referral. One situation recounted by a student, occurred during report card pickup, when a discussion of academic progress between his parents and the teacher resulted in a beating upon returning home.

Ethnic Self

An addition to the junior autobiographies was a section on ethnicity. This section elicited descriptions of the "ethnic self." Teachers asked juniors to identify and discuss their ethnic origins.[5] When writing about their ethnicity, Mexican and Puerto Rican juniors illustrated both pride and ambivalence (reminiscent of anthropologist Harold Issac's comment that "our snowman of ethnicity is the source of our pride as well as our humiliation" (1975).

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"My parents have not forgotten their country and customs just because we're living in the U.S. My parents have taught me to love my people and to always have pride in my nationality. We visit Mexico every chance we get, to visit our friends and relatives and also to see the beautiful places Mexico has to offer."

"I am from the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. I was naturally born here in Chicago but my family has taught me my heritage and to be proud of what I am and where I'm from. Puerto Rico holds a lot of memories and with all those memories there is a lot of love."

"I am a Hispanic who doesn't know much about his background. I guess a lot of Hispanics don't know much about their background because it is not advertised much in history. There are sometimes when I do not like people referring to me as a Hispanic because it means that I am a minority and in a way that hurts."

"My nationality is best known as the loud and bad-tempered gangbangers and drug dealers. Although I love being what I am it is embarrassing to know what most people think of us."

Thus, along with positive comments about their respective ethnic groups, students also describe themselves in ways that suggest marginality in American society. Insofar as these essays are representative of Latino groups, the descriptions should alert us to the difficulty for achievement of any kind when children have such ambivalence regarding a fundamental element of identity.

Changes in Junior School/Career Aspirations

The poor connections between the school self and the career self demonstrated by eighth graders, can be explained as a consequence of age. In other words, they are still too young, and these connections will be made during high school. However, even as juniors, students often remain unaware of the variety of possible careers available to them and of how to establish a successful career trajectory.

Junior Career Self

The most interesting part of the junior narratives is the section on career and future aspirations. Here, obvious differences emerge from the aspirations of Latino students as eighth graders and as juniors in high school. In one sense, goals appear to have become more "realistic." On the other hand, the aspirations of these students have been dampened seriously, as goals shifted from long term orientations to short term objectives. No longer do these 27 students look beyond the horizon to becoming a famous basketball player, business executive, doctor, lawyer or model. For most juniors, the focus shifts to more immediate concerns of going to college or getting a job. Of those students who did mention careers, the high status occupations to which they now aspired were: nurse, teacher, business (*e.g., accounting*), and data processor. Only one person wanted to be a lawyer and virtually no one mentioned NBA basketball player, model, clothes designer, or famous doctor. Aspirations had clearly been leveled to assist in the social reproduction of inequality. The military was also a popular avenue of opportunity with several students linking service with a possible college education. Even in those cases where goals remained "high," they were tempered by qualifications of "if I can afford it." One student wrote about her strategy of using service in the military to obtain a college education:

"I'm real worried about how I'm gonna pay for it. I'd like to go to college but probably won't. I don't have enough money to pay for it and my grades aren't good enough to get scholarships or anything like that. That's what I think. And if I go to the Air Force it'll be easier for me to go to college later."

Students also described how school personnel *assisted* them in lowering their goals (however inadvertently):

"The counselor [the school's only college counselor] shows you a book with all of the fees and tuition. It's kind of discouraging when I looked at the prices. I just can't afford it.

"I wanted to be a zoologist. I like animals. But I have one science course. My counselor told me I didn't need anymore science. Instead I took typing to graduate."

In the junior autobiographies, such aspirations as zoologist were rare. What remained from their eighth grade autobiographies was the desire to "be somebody." By their junior year this was translated into "make something of myself."

Conclusion

In comparing these autobiographies certain shifts become apparent:

1) As students progress through the educational process they continue to blame themselves for their poor educational experiences. However, as they mature, they also begin to find fault with the educational institution. Eighth grade evaluations of teacher "meanness" evolves into juniors' evaluations of teachers as boring and apathetic.

2) The confusion of elementary school often evolves into resentment and sometimes hostility toward the schooling process and its agents. Despite comments about disliking a certain teacher, the tenor of eighth grade descriptions of schooling are more benign than high school descriptions.

3) Those students who retain their aspirations are better able to integrate the "critical" selves, *in spite of*, rather than because of assistance from staff.

4) Although the family self was salient for the Mexican students, it does not appear to provide the type of *social capital* that facilitates an educational identity for these Latino students.[1]

Analysis of these autobiographies illustrates that the connection between education and future career is not well developed for Latino students. Furthermore, no one is assisting these students in successfully establishing the links between aspirations, school, and work. If anything, high school staff, however well intentioned, act to discourage students' aspirations, thus assisting in the social reproduction of inequality. Hence students are unable to compete in the educational marketplace or in the work force.

One thing is clear, without a better grasp on the student-career connection, Latino students will continue to be unable to tolerate the anxiety that schooling necessarily engenders. The educational experiences of so many Latino students (failing tests, being placed in low ability tracks, experiencing discipline and/or criticism by staff, socially distant or indifferent teachers and counselors), are generally so negative that it is difficult if not impossible for these students to tolerate the punishing aspects of schooling. This is particularly true when rewards are seldom acquired. Even the juniors who continue to express hope remain on a slow track, apparently to nowhere. Only the most resilient students will survive the process and graduate.

Consequently, we can add another "self" to Mr. Farrell's list of selves:

The Defeated Self

The dominant "self" of many Latino students is neither the student self, the career self, or an integrated version of the two. Rather, it is a "defeated" self, a self which no longer believes in its ability to acquire an opportunity to succeed. The *defeated* self is a self that does not recognize its cognitive competence, has little sense of self-efficacy, and does not experience the educational environment as supportive or open to his/her success (Garbarino, et al, 1991).

The context of the school described by these students, offers insights into how the majority of Latino students are asked to *play the game* with very little chance of winning it. Although punishment may well seem limitless or infinite to these students, whether in the classroom or in some other aspect of school, rewards are available only in limited supply. It is this social fact that explains best why the majority of these students disengage from schooling or only perform intermittently.

In his book on motivation and school reform, psychologist Martin Covington talks about the scarcity of rewards with respect to cognitive outcomes such as affection and attention (1992). To this, we must add the scarcity of *symbolic capital* or rewards such as "good" grades. There are typically only so many A's and B's given in any class, and as the value of a grade decreases, the number distributed increases (e.g., most classes distribute fewer A's than C's). There is only so much attention and affection available, only so many teacher's pets in a given class, and with the multiple teacher environment of a high school, the student is required to engage in this competitive ritual repeatedly with regard to the variation of teacher performance standards. For most students, it is necessarily a ritual of pain.

In addition to the allocative experiences resulting from ascriptive characteristics, students experience further allocation by the second most significant institution they encounter, the school. Here too, opportunities are provided, limited, or denied to students. Adults expect students to calculate long term associations between education and employment or future opportunity. However, how can we expect children to organize their social realities and direct these realities toward educational success, when we as adults cannot associate investment in these young people with the future productivity and promotion of our society?

These autobiographies indicate that even without the necessary guidance for making the critical connection between education and future job opportunities, Latino students continue to try to establish the connections for themselves. Over time, however, there is a decided change in the optimism of students. Students become worn out and dissatisfied with not achieving or even in some cases, understanding the reward(s). They respond to "failure" in a variety of ways. These responses can be manifested as *silencing*, when students no longer engage with the schooling process but remain in school (Fine, 1990), *resistance* as it is manifested by disruption of the schooling process, or refusing to participate (Gilligan, 1982; Walsh, 1991), and thereby *quitting* the game altogether, dropping out of school. Students give in, give up, or get out.

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Endnotes

1 There appeared to be little relationship between the composition of the family and the elaboration of the family section of the narrative. Six students were in nuclear families with both parents.

2 What is made clear via interviews with a subset of these students in their junior year in high school is that students who described having Latino elementary teachers were typically in the school's Bilingual program. The fact that students omit stating this can be attributed either to student lack of awareness of the school's structuring, relative indifference to the fact, or embarrassment at being in the bilingual program. This last point is mentioned since it was made clear that to be in the high school's bilingual program attached a certain stigma to students.

3 Other examples of what I refer to as teacher mobility were given in the opening quotations of the paper. One student describes three changes in teachers in fifth grade, six teacher changes during seventh grade, and three different teachers during eighth grade. The assumption here is that these teachers were probably substitute or temporary teachers.

4 Since most of these autobiographies come from one of the three main feeder schools we frequently find students naming the same teacher when offering descriptions of teacher behaviors. This gives us some check on the validity of their claims. Also, it was not unusual for a fourteen year old student to write that he/ she did not remember what occurred during the entire grade levels or who the teacher was for a given grade.

5 As juniors, many of these students wrote twice about their ethnicity; once in the autobiography, and again in an essay competition sponsored by the 7 Eleven Convenience store company. For the latter essay, students were asked to write about the reasons for pride in their heritage. Occasionally students simply used the same material for both papers.

6 Having conducted an ethnographic study within the high school, I interviewed the college counselor along with half of the counseling staff. The college counselor and several of the other counselors admitted attempting to readjust students'expectations, typically stating that they did not want to see the student disappointed by unrealistic expectations.

7 Social capital refers to the tangible and intangible benefits derived from being embedded in social networks such as the family, friendships groups, or work groups.

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